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PATENT

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DATE

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : David A. Grilli et al.
Serial No. : 09/933,534
Filing Date : August 20, 2001
For : THERMOPLASTIC
POLYOLEFIN ELASTOMER
STEERING WHEEL
Group Art Unit : 3682
Examiner : Chong H. Kim
Attorney Docket No. : TRW(AP) 5727
Cleveland, OH 44114

Commissioner of Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

ELECTION WITH TRAVERSE

Sir:

In response to the Office Action of June 7, 2006 the Applicants elect claims 1, 3, 5-12 and 14-18 (hereinafter, "the Group I claims"), with traverse.

Reconsideration of the requirement for restriction is respectfully requested because the inventions identified in the Office Action are (1) related to one another as product and process for making product, (2) are not

distinct and (3) would require no additional effort on the part of the United States Patent Office to examine all claims in the application.

The inventions recited in the Group I claims and claims 19-37 (hereinafter, "the Group II claims") are related to each other as product and process for making product. A steering wheel comprises a rim portion, a spoke portion, and a foamed thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer padding material adhered to the rim and spoke portions. The foamed thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer padding material is formed by mixing a thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer and a chemical foaming agent and then foaming the thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer with the chemical foaming agent.

The inventions recited in the Group I and Group II claims are not distinct because the product as claimed cannot be made by another and materially different process. The Office Action states that the inventions identified in the Office Action are distinct because the process of covering the rim and spoke portions can be done by manually covering the portions after forming the padding separately. The foamed padding material is formed around the rim and spoke portions of the steering wheel using an injection-molding process. It is important to

use an injection-molding process because: (1) filling the rim and spoke cavities of the mold in a short period of time eliminates sink marks and knit lines in the foamed padding material; and (2) the degree of foaming of the thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer surrounding the rim and spoke portions can be increased or decreased by varying the temperature of the mold's first and second wall portions, respectively.

Therefore, it cannot be shown that the product as claimed can be made by another and materially different, i.e., manual process.

Furthermore, it would require no additional effort on the part of the United States Patent Office to examine all claims in the application. Both the apparatus and method claims are directed to a steering wheel comprising a rim portion, a spoke portion, and a foamed thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer formed by mixing a thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer and a chemical foaming agent and then foaming the thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer with the chemical foaming agent.

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As such, an examination of all pending claims in the present application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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